DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 195 TM 032 305

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE The Student, Journal Writing, and Assessment.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Learning; Student Evaluation; *Student Journals; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

Journal writing gives students opportunities to practice writing in a way relevant to their experiences and not merely as an exercise in writing for writing's sake. There are many opportunities for a student to write about subject matter learned from ongoing lessons, as examples from the journal of a sixth grader illustrate. Listening to current events on the radio or watching them on television provides excellent subject matter for writing journal entries. Dramatizing social studies learning assists students to breathe life into the curriculum, and this can be accomplished through journal entries. Entries can complement other projects, as the example of a journal written to accompany a student's map illustrates. Journals help students feel a sense of ownership in their writing, and they allow them to choose an intrapersonal or interpersonal manner as they express themselves. Self-evaluation of the journal provides another learning opportunity. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

The Student, Journal Writing, and Assessment

Marlow Ediger

ED 449 195

TM032305

M. Ediger

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE STUDENT, JOURNAL WRITING, AND ASSESSMENT

Students need to communicate effectively with others. Writing content is one way of communication. It is relatively easy to misunderstand what was communicated in writing unless there are definite standards followed of clarity, intent, and comprehension. Once content has been written, the message remains as is unlike that of oral communication. With the latter, one can change what has been said such as in, "That is not quite what I mean, I meant ...." Or, a person says, "You know what I mean," after conveying a prior message.

Written communication then stresses conciseness, accuracy, and adequate specificity. Otherwise, there are so many loopholes in ideas being conveyed. All teachers need to assist students to communicate ideas in writing. Social studies can make a unique contribution since subject matter therein, among other items, pertains to being a good member in society. To be a functioning member in society, one communicates with others. Written communication is quite complex when thinking of the general subdivisions of writing including correct spelling of words, legible handwriting if longhand is used, sequence of ideas presented, paragraphing, complete sentences, and punctuation marks. Omitting one comma, for example, can make much difference in interpretation:

1. Bill, my cousin, is visiting here.
2. Bill, my cousin, is vising here.

The student only needs to leave out a comma when writing words in a series to notice how the inherent meaning changes of what was written.

Thus, writing is complex and complicated. The social studies teacher needs to emphasize ideas being placed in written form when providing teaching and learning activities. The social studies and writing experiences need to be integrated and not isolated entities. Journal writing provides opportunities for students to practice writing with the concept of relevance being involved in these kinds of experiences, and not writing for the sake of writing. Thus, when students engage in writing activities, there is a purpose and that is to communicate effectively with others in society (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Twelve).

Journal Writing in Ongoing Lessons

There are ample opportunities for students to write subject matter learned from ongoing lessons, in a journal entry. The following are examples:

1. we learned about the geography of the Holy Land area. It is interesting to notice that Jerusalem and Jericho are only 18 miles apart

and yet the elevation varies from 2500 feet above sea level to 800 feet below sea level respectively. Four miles southeast of Jericho is the Dead Sea which is the lowest point on earth in elevation -- 1300 feet below sea level!

2. we also learned that east Jerusalem has an encircling wall two and one/half miles in distance. This is the third wall built in history around old Jerusalem and was completed in 1542 when the Ottoman Empire rule the Holy Land. Inside the wall there are three holy sites: The Dome of the Rock, an octagonal, beautiful mosque built in 691 AD which is sacred to devout Muslims; the western wall, adjacent to the Dome of the Rock, which is the only remnant of the ancient Jewish temple and sacred to devout followers if Judaism; and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built in 1142 AD, holy to followers of Christianity and believed to be the place of the Tomb of Christ (See Ediger, 1998, 1-10) for a discussion of elevation or specific regions in the Holy Land).

The above entries were written by a sixth grader in a class where the author supervised a student teacher and cooperating teacher. Subject mater acquired is used to write journal entries. The entries may be written individually or cooperatively by students (See Dunn and, 1979, for a discussion of learning styles). Proof reading journal entries provides another avenue for reading as well as diagnosing/remedying deficiencies in writing.

Journal Writing and Current Events

Listening to current events on radio and TV provides excellent subject matter for writing journal entries. The current events curriculum keeps the social studies updated. There are vital objectives in current events which need to be selected and implemented as learning opportunities. Assessment need to be done in terms of the stated objectives. The objectives may relate to the following news items written as journal writing:

1. the land formerly called Palestine is wanted by both Arabs and Jews. New items describe skirmishes between the opposing sides in the conflict. The Tomb of Joseph, a son of the Patriarch Jacob, located near Nablus (ancient Samaria), as well as the tomb of Rachel , wife of the Patriarch Jacob, very recently had armed action for its control by both Arabs and Jews. The Tomb of Rachel is located just outside Bethlehem.

2. Biblical sites are holy to both Arabs and Jews. In the news recently, Hezekiah's Tunnel connected to the Pool of Siloam and located along the eastern side of the walled city of Jerusalem was mentioned along with video tape pictures. In the very short distance from these two sites, the Tomb of Absalom, son of King David in ancient times, could also be seen. Thus, the Kidron Valley contains these and other sites,

holy to both Arabs and Jews.

There are a plethora of specifics which may be assessed in journal writing including the following:

1. punctuation such as commas, end punctuation marks, quotation marks, and apostrophes.
2. indentation of sequential paragraphs, proper use of capital and lower case letters, correct spelling of words, as well as proper proportion and spacing of letters/words when printing/writing in long hand.
3. coherence of ideas within a paragraph, quality sentence, structure and grammar, as well as main ideas being supported by details.

Not all students in a class are at the same starting place when writing is being emphasized. There are better and slower achievers in writing. The social studies teacher needs to accept where each student is in writing quality presently and then work for continued success for each learner. Optimal achievement for each student in writing progress is a must. However, individual levels of optimal achievement need to be considered within this framework. Each student's present achievement level may be compared with his/her past accomplishment to notice progress and growth in writing. Ideas inherent in writing count the most when assessing student achievement in written work (Ediger, 1996, 15-22).

Journal Writing and Dramatic Experiences

Dramatizing social studies learnings assist students to breathe life into the curriculum. One form of dramatization is formal dramatics. Here, a committee of students may write specific play parts to be dramatized. The basal text may be an excellent source to use for students writing these play parts. The written play parts pertain to those individuals in the basal who played relevant roles in history in the social studies. The parts may be memorized or read aloud when the formal dramatics is presented in class and to other classrooms.

A second form of dramatization is creative dramatics. Here, students need to have excellent background knowledge before spontaneously presenting the creative dramatize presentation to others. A related form of dramatization is the pantomime whereby no words are spoken aloud. With gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements, participants in a pantomime present social studies ideas to viewers. This is indeed a difficult kind of dramatization in which no words are used in communicating content!

Journal entries from the above three named kinds of dramatic activities may include the following:

1. we dramatized creatively a meeting between Yassir Arafat,

President of the Palestine Authority (PA) , and the Prime Minister of Israel in discussing possible solutions to the disagreements between the two sides on the future of the land of the Holy Land. It is difficult to think while on one's feet, with no written play parts, while role playing a part pertaining to the opposing sides in the Middle East Conflict.

2. we tried the presentation as in #1 above in pantomime form with no words being used. It was impossible in this case to dramatize an event with non-verbal communication only. It revealed to us the importance of using oral communication and using it effectively to express oneself. We also became convinced of the importance of non-verbal facets on interacting with others. The use of gestures, facial expressions, and body movements is vital to help inform, persuade, and have an effect on others along with the many dimensions of oral language. We videotaped our creative dramatics presentation and noticed how frequently non-verbal facets of communication were used. We discussed other experiences within our social studies unit of study in which pantomime might be used effectively as the sole means of communication.

3. we also did a formal dramatics presentation. Participants felt the most security in role playing occurred while reading the play parts. One participant had even memorized his role. We discussed that all three kinds of dramatizations need to be used to make social studies experiences more life-like (Ediger, 2000, 28-34).

Physical Geography and the Holy Land

When studying locations on the Middle East, the student/cooperating teacher asked if a committee would want to make a relief map of the Holy Land. They discussed what would be involved. A large piece of ply wood would form the base. The plywood was to measure two feet by three feet. A mixture of flour and salt with enough water added to make a thick paste provided for the modeling material of the relief map to be placed on the ply wood. The class discussed which geographical regions to put into the relief map. These included the western coastal plain involving the cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv, located forty miles apart: the Plain of Esdraelen shaped like a triangle with dimensions of thirty miles by thirty miles by forty miles in distance, adjacent to and almost directly east of Haifa; the Judean Hills located from Nazareth in the north to Hebron in the south, a distance of 110 miles; the Jordan valley stretching from Mount Hermon, 9,200 feet above sea level, in the north to the Dead Sea, 1300 feet below sea level in the south, a distance of 120 miles; and the irrigated plain of Jericho, located 800 feet below sea level and being a desert region. Journal entries written pertaining to the four committee members involved in the map making experience included the following:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1. we encountered problems in attempting to shape accurately the hills, plains, and valleys of a given region. Much care was given to present an accurate model when showing the relationships of these land forms. The flour/salt mixture gave us time to redo that which was needed in map making.

2. rules for map making are a must! We developed with teacher guidance the following rules: each student must do his/her fair share of the work so that learning for all takes place; we stay on task in order that headway is made toward completion of the project; politeness toward others is very important; and we discuss cooperatively what needs to be done along the way on the project.

3. we labeled important cities on the completed relief map. A legend was developed showing different colors of elevation. Tempora paint was used to color the map to show diverse elevation features as related to the legend. Students and teachers from other classrooms came in to observe and comment on the completed relief map. The comments were quite positive!. (Ediger, 1997-1998, 56-50)

Concluding Statements on Journal Writing

A good way to encourage student writing is to emphasize journal writing. There are a plethora of advantages in using journal writing in assisting students to communicate effectively. These include the following:

1. Each student has ownership of his/her written script. The student then is the chooser as to what to write about.

2. Students then may feel that writing is individualized in that each may select, organize, and sequence content to write about.

3. Writing here is personalized in that the learner writes abut feelings, subject matter, attitudes, and values about what is prized in the social studies curriculum.

4. Learners may choose to write in an intrapersonal or interpersonal manner.

5. Self evaluation of the journal is possible as well as to use qualified adults to assess journal entries. Based on a five point scale and with each level being clearly written out as to what is expected from the involved student, raters may assess each journal. Interscorer reliability is important in ratings given. If there is no agreement among raters, then the statements describing each level of achievement have not been written specific enough (Ediger, 1997, Chapter Seven).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

References

Dunn, Rita, and Kenneth Dunn (1979), "Teaching Styles/Learning Styles," Educational Leadership, 36 (4), 238-244.

Ediger, Marlow (1998), The Holy Land. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, pp 1-10.

Ediger, Marlow and D. Bhaskara Rao (2000), Teaching Reading Successfully. New Delhi, India: Discovery Publishing House, Chapter Twelve.

Ediger, Marlow (1996), "Evaluation of Pupil Achievement," Education Magazine, nr. 118, 15-22. Published by the Qatar National Commission for Education, in the Middle East.

Edger, Marlow (2000), "Psychology in Teaching Social Studies," Journal of Instructional Psychology, 27 (10, 28-24.

Ediger, Marlow (1997-1998), "Portfolios and the Social Studies," Journal of the Illinois Council for the Social Studies, 26-60.

Ediger, Marlow (1997), Social Studies Curriculum in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, Chapter Seven.